

Message Text

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PAGE 01 KUWAIT 00355 221201Z

15

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USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

C O N F I D E N T I A L KUWAIT 0355

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MASS, KU

SUBJ: VISIT OF DEPUSCINCEUR TO KUWAIT

SUMMARY: JANUARY 20-22 VISIT TO KUWAIT GENERAL ROBERT HUYSER, DEPUSCINCEUR, HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL AND WARMLY WELCOMED BY GOK. RESULTED IN PLEA BY DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER FOR MAXIMUM USG CO-OPERATION IN SUPPORT KUWAITI ARMS MODERNIZATION PROGRAM, NOT ONLY IN TERMS OF WHAT IT WOULD DO FOR KUWAIT BUT ALSO FOR GOOD IMAGE OF US THROUGHOUT GULF REGION. KUWAITI OFFICIALS PRESENTED LIST OF PROBLEM AREAS UNDER FMS PROGRAMS WHICH GENERAL HUYSER AGREED TO ADDRESS PERSONALLY WITH DOD. VISIT EXCEEDINGLY USEFUL TO EMBASSY, WITH JOINT STRATEGY DEVELOPED FOR PURSUING PROBLEM OF USLOK MANNING AND PENDING IHAWK DISCUSSIONS. END SUMMARY

1. DEPUSCINCEUR GENERAL ROBERT HUYSER VISITED KUWAIT JANUARY 20-22, HOLDING MEETINGS WITH DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER/ACTING DEFENSE MINISTER SHAIKH JABIR AL-ALI AND CHIEF OF STAFF OF KUWAIT ARMED FORCES GENERAL MUBARAK. ALSO MET WITH CHIEF, BRITISH LIAISON TEAM, AND ATTENDED RECEPTION EVENING JANUARY 21 WITH LARGE NUMBER KUWAITI MILITARY OFFICIALS AND OTHER SELECTED GUESTS IN ATTENDANCE.

2. ACCOMPANIED BY CHARGE, GENERAL HUYSER MET FOR ONE HOUR WITH ACTING DEFENSE MINISTER. TELEVISION AND PHOTOGRAPHERS COVERED
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PAGE 02 KUWAIT 00355 221201Z

ARRIVAL, WITH MINISTER EXPLAINING HE WANTED ENSURE FULL PRESS

TREATMENT ACCORDED MEETING WITH AMERICAN MILITARY FRIENDS. FOLLOWING USUAL EXCHANGE OF COURTESIES, MINISTER MADE PLEA FOR MAXIMUM USG COOPERATION IN KUWAIT'S ARMY MODERNIZATION PROGRAM. STRESSED THAT GOK INTENDED TO RELY PRINCIPALLY ON US AND UK TO MEET ITS EQUIPMENT AND TRAINING NEEDS. REPEATEDLY ASSURED VISITOR KUWAITI MILITARY PURCHASES MADE STRICTLY TO MEET DEFENSIVE NEEDS. SAID ARMS PURCHASES FROM OTHER SOURCES, INCLUDING THOSE FROM USSR, BEING MADE SOLELY FOR "POLITICAL REASONS". LIKENING KUWAIT TO A SMALL BOAT BETWEEN TWO BIG SHIPS, MINISTER SAID GOK PREVIOUSLY HAD STEPPED VERY CAUTIOUSLY, BUT IT NOW HAD MADE BASIC DEFENSE PROCUREMENT DECISIONS AND WAS DETERMINED TO RESIST PRESSURES FROM EITHER INSIDE OR OUTSIDE IN IMPLEMENTING PLANS. HE EXPRESSED HIS PLEA FOR US SUPPORT NOT ONLY IN TERMS OF WHAT IT WOULD DO FOR KUWAIT BUT ALSO FOR THE GOOD IMAGE OF US THROUGHOUT THE GULF REGION.

3. MINISTER EXPRESSED CONCERN REGARDING USG PERFORMANCE UNDER AGREED AND PROPOSED FMS PROGRAMS. SAID HE HAD ASKED GENERAL MUBARAK, CHIEF OF STAFF OF KUWAIT ARMED FORCES, TO DISCUSS IN DETAIL SPECIFIC PROBLEMS AND KUWAITI NEEDS. SINGLED OUT AIR DEFENSE AS OF PRIME IMPORTANCE TO KUWAIT AND AS AREA OF NEED IN WHICH GOK DEPENDING ENTIRELY ON US FOR EFFECTIVE ASSISTANCE. GENERAL HUYSER REVIEWED US OBJECTIVES IN GULF AREA, STRESSING DESIRE US TO PLAY CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE CONSISTENT WITH AREA NEEDS, REQUIREMENTS FOR STABILITY AND US INTERESTS. PROMISED TO LEND ASSISTANCE IN SEEKING MAXIMUM USG COOPERATION, CONSISTENT WITH AGREED FMS PROGRAMS.

4. IN SUBSEQUENT MEETING, GENERAL MUBARAK WENT OVER MUCH OF SAME GROUND STRESSING MAJOR KUWAITI CONCERN REMAINED IRAQ. GENERAL PRESENTED SPECIFIC LIST PROBLEM AREAS UNDER FMS PROGRAMS. HE ALSO SINGLED OUT AIR DEFENSE AS KUWAIT'S NUMBER ONE PROBLEM AND COMPLAINED ABOUT COST INCREASES IN IHAWK PROGRAM. WITHOUT REFERENCE TO QUANTITIES, HE SAID KUWAIT CONSIDERING SOME ARMS PURCHASES FROM USSR (SCUD SA-7, ZSU-23) BUT THAT NO CONTRACT CONCLUDED. MUBARAK NOTED THAT DURING JUST COMPLETED TRIP TO EGYPT AND SYRIA, HE HAD OBTAINED EGYPTIAN AGREEMENT TO PROVIDE ADVISORS TO ASSIST WITH SOVIET EQUIPMENT PURCHASES. GOK DID NOT WANT RUSSIAN ADVISORS IN KUWAIT. GENERAL IMPLIED GOK RELUCTANT ABOUT SOVIET PURCHASES AND EXPRESSED PERSONAL HOPE USG MIGHT BE PREPARED TO PROVIDE ALTERNATIVE EQUIPMENT.

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PAGE 03 KUWAIT 00355 221201Z

GENERAL HUYSER AGAIN INDICATED HE WOULD LOOK INTO FMS PROBLEM AREAS, BUT MADE NO COMMITMENTS CONCERNING POSSIBLE ADDITIONAL ARMS SALES. OBSERVED GOK WOULD BE HARD PRESSED TO MOUNT EFFECTIVE DEFENSE FORCE UNDER MULTI-SOURCE PROCUREMENT PROGRAM, WHICH MUBARAK ACKNOWLEDGED.

5. EMBASSY STAFF AND GENERAL HUYSER AND PARTY DISCUSSED OVER MOST AFTERNOON JANUARY 21 LIST OF PROBLEMS PROVIDED BY

MUBARAK. LIST, WITH EMBASSY COMMENTARY, WILL BE PROVIDED SEPTEL. GENERAL EXPRESSED FULL SUPPORT NEED TO MOVE AS EXPEDITIOUSLY AS POSSIBLE TO BRING USLOK MANNING TO APPROVED NINE POSITIONS. ONE MEMBER HIS STAFF LEFT IN KUWAIT TO WORK WITH IHAWK TEAM SCHEDULED TO ARRIVE JANUARY 23 AND TO DEVELOPE PROPOSAL MADE BY HIM FOR TACKLING USLOK MANNING PROBLEM WHICH, HOPEFULLY, WILL RESULT IN RENEWED LOA TO GOK SOONEST. PROMISED TO AGRESSIVELY PURSUE ISSUE, ALONG WITH OTHER KUWAITI PROBLEMS, DURING PLANNED VISIT WASHINGTON IN FEBRUARY.

6. EMBASSY COMMENTARY: DESPITE INITIAL RESERVATIONS, EMBASSY CONSIDERS VISIT GENERAL HUYSER HIGHLY USEFUL IN ADDRESSING BOTH INTERNAL PROBLEMS RELATED FMS PROGRAMS AND IN HELPING MOLLIFY KUWAITI CRITICISMS OUR PAST EFFORTS. HE WAS HIGHLY ARTICULATE AND PERSUASIVE SPOKESMAN FOR US AND WE HOPE VISIT WILL RESULT IN IMPROVED USG PERFORMANCE AND UNDERSTANDING IN AREA US MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO KUWAIT. CONTENTS THIS MESSAGE APPROVED IN SUBSTANCE BY GENERAL HUYSER, WHOSE STAFF WILL PREPARE MORE DETAILED REPORT.
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